

SHORT and PLAIN

CONSIDERATIONS,

T O

Convince Men of the Danger of Separating from the COMMUNION of their PARISH-CHURCHES.

With a LETTER to Mr. T. B.

Τοις μέγαλ' οὐτοῦ ἀνθρ, ὃς ἀνῆνατο πάλ' αὖ πιδείξ
Δυσσεβείων βελῆ, αὐτῷ τε μέλ' ἔχοντα βλῶαι

AS I take it to be the Duty of all the Ministers of our Excellent Church, to remind their respective Flocks, how much it concerns them to live in a strict and constant Adherence to its Communion, as the safest Course they can take for the everlasting Salvation of their Souls ; and how dangerous their Condition is, that separate from it : And as I have now a particular Occasion offer'd me of delivering my Thoughts upon that Subject ; so I conceive, this may be done with some Advantage of Clearness and Perspicuity in the following Method.

THAT we may be saved according to the Rule of God's reveal'd Will, we must be Members of Christ's Church ; that we may be Members of Christ's Church, we must be Partakers of the Sacraments, which he instituted to initiate and confirm us therein, by making them the stated and ordinary Means of conveying to

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his his Divine Grace ; that we may partake of the Sacraments, they must be administred by Persons duly commission'd ; lastly, that these Persons may be duly commission'd, they must be ordained by such as derive this Authority in a continued and uninterrupted Succession from the Apostles, as they did theirs from our Saviour, *John* xx. 21.

For since he has appointed an Order of Men in his Church to be continued to the End of the World, for the Administration of his Holy Word and Sacraments, as appears from St. *Matthew* xxviii. 20. it is requisite, they shou'd have his Divine Commission for it, in order to empower them to transact the Affairs of his Spiritual Kingdom, and apply the Seals of the New Covenant in his Name, whence they are called in Scripture, Ambassadors for Christ, Stewards of the Mysteries of God, Overseers and Pastors of his Flock, &c. For it is allow'd in all other Cases, that no Commission can be valid, but what is derived from such as have an Authority to grant it ; as for Instance, in the Case of a Colonel, a Judge, a Justice of the Peace, &c. And it is no less evident, that this could not be handed down to them thro' all Ages, any other ways than by a continued Succession from the Apostles.

For if it cou'd be proved, that there was but one single breach in it, it is plain there can be no such thing as a Divine Commission for the Ministry ; for the Claim of an immediate Call, can never be justified for want of those Credentials or miraculous Gifts, which the Apostles and others in their Days had to shew for it. And to derive it from the People, or the Civil Magistrate, is a Pretence equally groundless and precarious ; it nowhere appearing either in Scripture or Antiquity, that they ever had this Power vested in them ; but on the contrary, we find our Saviour and his Apostles St. *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Timothy* and *Titus* creating Church-Officers without the least Intimation of so much as even their Concurrence therein ; and it is certain, there were no Christian Magistrates during the three first Centuries to lay claim to it ; nor does it appear, that they've
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ever since pretended to invest any Church-Minister with a proper Character. And here it is of no weight to object against the Necessity of this continued Succession, that a Breach in the Succession of Temporal Princes does not destroy their Divine Commission; for there is no Rule instituted in Scripture for their Succession, as there is in the Case of Ministers.

Now this Authority of ordaining Ministers, as convey'd down successively from the Apostles has been undeniably proved to belong to our Bishops*, by whose Hands we receive our Mission: But no Dissenting Teacher can ever pretend to it; for they can't name one single Presbyter that was allow'd to have this Authority vested in him, before the Reformation, in any Church in the World, and accordingly that none of them can justly claim this Power, is the general Opinion of Christians all the World over at this very Day: And therefore how eminent soever the Dissenting Teachers may be as to their natural Parts and Attainments, they can never be allowed to have a lawful Mission, if we either regard the unanimous Sense and Practice of the whole Church of Christ for at least fifteen hundred Years, or of the generality of Christians in the succeeding Ages of it; and consequently you can never have a well-grounded Assurance of the Validity of their Administrations: But on the contrary, have just Grounds to question, whether Baptism and the Lord's Supper as Administred by them, be really Sacraments or no; nay, a strong Presumption, that they are not, in regard, in all probability they have no Power of dispensing them for want of a due and valid Commission; for it is certain, that † those Presbyters at or since the Reformation from whom they would be thought to derive it, had no such Power as this of commissioning Ministers committed to them at their Ordination; and therefore could not confer it upon others: for how can

* See a late excellent Defence of it by Mr. P. F. de Courayer, *tho* of a Party that are the only open Opposers of it.

† See the Ordinals of our Church vindicated, in the fore-cited excellent Tract.

any Man give what he is not possessed of himself? And that they had it not in their Original Institution, as being a distinct Order from those, whom the Apostles intrusted it with, has been (I humbly conceive) evidently made appear in a small Tract formerly published upon the same Subject, entituled, *A short View of the Controversy about Episcopacy, &c.* Whence it is obvious to infer, that if Men regard the Salvation of their Souls, it is much safer for them to continue in the Communion of the Establish'd Church, than to part with it for any Dissenting Congregation whatsoever.

Besides, that every Christian, as he is a Member of Christ's Church, is obliged to hold external Communion with that part of it, where it can be lawfully had, in order to the publick Worship of God, and the solemn Profession of our Religion, which are Duties indispensably incumbent upon us; and that this may be lawfully had with the Establish'd Church of *England*, has been publickly owned in Print *, as by the Foreign Reformed Churches, so by the most knowing and learned of our Dissenters themselves. And this Concession of theirs further appears from their known Practice of repairing occasionally to our Assemblies. And in case some should deny this, I dare challenge any one of them to prove one sinful Term of Communion enjoined in it, or that it is a breach of any one Command in Holy Writ. Now admitting the Truth of these Observations (as it can't in Reason be denied) it clearly follows, that you can't join with any separate Congregation without sinning against God; for thereby, you incur the Guilt of a causeless Separation, which is the Sin of Schism, that we are so often and so warmly caution'd against both in Scripture and † Antiquity; for such is every Separation from a Church that enjoins no sinful Terms of Communion, as is confessed ‡ by the most learned of your own Writers, as the Assembly of Divines, &c. Especially when such as are engaged

* See Mr. Durel's View, and Dr. Bennet's Abridgement, &c.

† See Ap. can. 24. Can. 6. Constant. 6. Afr. 10, 11.

‡ See Dr. Wells's Collection of Testimonies.

in't set up opposite Assemblies, and constitute Church-Officers without Authority or any lawful Commission, as is the case of our Dissenters, wherein they exceed the Novatians, Donatists, Miletians and other antient Schismatics: 2. You make a Rent in this part of Christ's Church, in breach of your Duty of *promoting Peace and Unity therein*, *Ephes. iv. 3.* 3. You join with Separatists, and partake of their Sin in opposition to *St. Paul's pressing Exhortation of avoiding such as cause Divisions*, *Rom. xvi. 17.* which how flagrant and heinous a Sin it is, may be further made appear from several other Passages in Holy Writ; particularly *1 Cor. iii. 3.* *Jude 19.* where such as are guilty of it, are stiled *Carnal and Sensual, having not the Spirit*; and * the unanimous Sense of Antiquity on this head. But since it is not consistent with my intended Brevity, to produce the numerous Testimonies to be met with to this purpose; at present I shall only lay before you the two following noted Passages. *Irenæus* † testifies, that Schism is such a rending of the great and glorious Body of Christ, as makes the Guilt of Schismatics equal to that of Apostates from the Faith, who crucify to themselves afresh the Lord of Glory; and *St. Cyprian* ‡ declares, that he has no longer God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother, but is out of the number of the Faithful, and tho' he should die for the Faith, yet should he never be saved. And if the Law of God, as interpreted by Antiquity, thus condemns your Separation, doubtless the Act of Toleration, which is but a humane Law, can never justify it: and therefore it is highly absurd and unreasonable to make use of this as a Plea in its favour. Upon the whole, if the foregoing Considerations prove solid and well grounded (as I trust they will, and am ready to retract, in case the contrary can be made appear with respect to any one of them) I presume, none but prejudiced Persons can be offended at them, in regard upon this Supposition, it

* See Mr. Burscough and Dr. Bennet of Schism.

† Lib. 4. cap. 53.

‡ De Unitate Eccles.

must be as much as our Souls are worth to conceal them; for if by means of our criminal Silence Men should perish, we must unavoidably partake of the Guilt, and thereby involve our selves in their Punishment.

And so far is your Occasional Conformity from mitigating the Guilt of your Separation, that it is a notorious Aggravation of it: For it is an implicit Acknowledgment, that you are persuaded you may lawfully join in Communion with us, else you could not do it without acting against the Dictates of your Conscience; and therefore if a causeless Separation be sinful (as is generally allow'd on all hands) it must be your manifest Duty to be constant Adherents to our Communion, instead of halting between two Opinions. For since you may sometimes lawfully do this, by parity of Reason you may at any other time justify the doing of it; and if so, it is beyond dispute, that a due Regard to the publick Peace, and Unity of this part of Christ's Church, and the great Duties of Charity, Moderation, and bearing a part in composing the lamentable Breaches of it, must be very powerful Considerations to oblige you to a constant Communion with it, as manifestly outweighing all the Inconveniencies, that can possibly accrue from this Practice: and therefore it is of infinite Concern and Importance to you, seriously to weigh and consider all that may at any time be offer'd for your Conviction, and endeavour all you can to inform your self aright in this momentous Affair: for whatever slight Notions you may have of the Sin of Schism; yet you ought to consider, how you can possibly be entitled to the Promises made to the Peace-makers, whilst you wilfully and obstinately persist to oppose those Rules, which God requires your Obedience to, for the Preservation of the Peace, and Unity of his Church.

But after all, whilst I am thus endeavouring to convince Men of the Danger of separating from their Parish Churches; that I may not be thought to lay too great a Stress upon the peculiar Advantages of our Church-Communion, I must not omit to remind them of another Danger they are equally exposed to, owing

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its rise to a Cause still more fatal and destructive, viz. their impious and immoral Lives; which if they don't reform, tho' they profess themselves Members of the purest and best-constituted Church in the World (as I assuredly take ours to be) it can be of no avail to 'em; for it is certain, that wicked and prophane Livers can't be saved in any: And therefore, I pray God we may all duely and seriously consider of it.



To Mr. T. B.

SIR,

THESE plain and short Observations having been written upon Mrs. Wood's Account (who has been my Parishioner, when Minister of Bodvay) are sent you in compliance with your Request, signified to me by Mr. Recorder; which having perused, you are desired to return in a Day or two. I have no more to add, with respect to them, but to assure you, that I propose to my self no other Ends therein, than the bare Satisfaction of having in some measure discharg'd my Duty upon this emergent Occasion, and that notwithstanding our Diversity of Persuasions,

I am, SIR,

Your Affectionate Friend

and Humble Servant,

GR. JONES.



A
D E F E N C E
 OF THE

Short and Plain Considerations, &c.

AGAINST THE
 EXCEPTIONS of Mr. T. B.

S I R,

I Am surpriz'd to find so trifling and ludicrous an Answer, from a Person of your Note and Character, as that to Mr. Recorder, to say no worle of it; and so impertinent and foreign to the Subject, as that which has been since directed to myself: For how strange and unaccountable a Method must it be to pretend to answer a Tract, and yet not attempt to disprove one single Argument in it? unless making wretched Misconstructions of plain Passages, and drawing odious and ill-grounded Consequences from them; or shifting Sides, and proposing Objections, instead of answering the Arguments urged therein; or, lastly, despising and vilifying the Performance, and its Author, can be allowed to be such! Which (I conceive) deserves any other name, rather than that of an *Answer*. Now, that this is the Truth of the case, may in some measure be made appear from a cursory View of the following Particulars.

For, 1st, does it not clearly appear from the whole Scope and Tenour of my Paper, That when I mention

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*Separating from the Communion of our Parish-Churches, I can't possibly mean this in Opposition to other particular Churches of the same Communion ; but the Dissenting Congregations only, or parting with the Communion of the Church of England, as I've more than once intimated in the body of this small Tract? This is so egregious a Blunder, that the most ordinary Reader must wink hard if he doth not perceive it. And your way of reasoning upon this head is so extreamly weak, that I am really concern'd for you, and charitably hope it can be imputed to nothing else but your great Haste and Precipitancy: For where is the Consequence of it, that because we may lawfully repair for divine Service from one Parish to another of the same Communion, (as to make use of your Instance from *Henllan* to *Denbigh*) that we may by Parity of Reason warrant the doing of this with opposite and schismatical Assemblies that have no lawful Ministers, as you are pleas'd to insinuate? Or how does it follow, because the Bounds of Parish-Churches, or the Bounds of Parishes, (for so you must mean, in order to make true Sense of it) are mere humane and prudential Constitutions, (which I readily grant) that we are at liberty either to join in Communion with a true and regularly-constituted Church, as our's is, or with unlawful Assemblies? For such are all those that separate from a true Church, that enjoins no sinful Terms of Communion, as I've in some measure prov'd both from Scripture and Antiquity; and must be allow'd, till you produce the like Authority for this Practice.*

2dly, Where do I say, either in exprefs Terms, or by necessary Construction and Implication, that no Dissenter can be saved? For tho' I've prov'd by a Chain or Series of Propositions, (most of them self-evident; and the rest, I trust, so well grounded, that you can't disprove any one of 'em) that our SAVIOUR has appointed the Sacraments, as administred by Persons duly commission'd, to be the ordinary stated Means of Salvation, and that these may be undoubtedly enjoy'd by Persons in our Communion; But that there is not the like
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Assurance of enjoying 'em in any separate Congregation; nay, a strong Presumption that they are not duely and validly administred there: Yet I thence only inferr'd, that it is much safer, with regard to our eternal Salvation, to continue in the Communion of this Church, than to part with it for any Dissenting Congregation whatsoever. So that you see I am not at all concern'd in that invidious Conclusion, that you have drawn from this Article; which is not the Doctrine of some few hot-headed Persons only, (as you would fain persuade Men to believe) but of the Bulk of the most learned and pious Members of this Church, as well as of most of the Churches abroad; as must be granted, till you can prove the contrary: And therefore you might have sav'd yourself the Trouble of haranguing so long on this Head. For it is one distinguishing Characteristick of our excellent Church, that it does not confine Salvation to Persons in its own Communion only; as some others do, as well amongst our Dissenters, as in the Church of *Rome*: Nor do we pretend to set Limits to GOD's infinite Mercy and Goodness; which we charitably hope he will extend to Persons that labour under the Disadvantages of Prejudice, Ignorance, Necessity, &c. tho' they want the Happiness of being Members of Churches duely and regularly constituted according to his reveal'd Will. Yet here I must not omit to remind you of your Mistake, in ranking the *Albigenses* or *Waldenses* in that Number, who are known to have had Bishops among them. As to your Doctrine, tho' some of the Presbyterian Teachers have declared themselves Orthodox on that head; yet it is observable, that they and the rest of our Dissenters have no Common and Publick Declarations which they are oblig'd to give their Publick Suffrage and Consent to; nor any Publick Establishment relating to Faith and Worship, tho' they are the only Persons in the World that are chargeable with this criminal Silence. To close up all that I have to offer upon this Head, we know that some of the foreign Reform'd Churches have pleaded Necessity for their irregular Ordinations; which, how far it may be allow'd of, is not my

my Province to determine, but this Plea you can never pretend to: and therefore whatever Allowances may be made in their favour, your Condition may be equally dangerous notwithstanding. But admit this Doctrine should be liable to the Charge of bearing hard upon some of the foreign Reformed Churches, yet, notwithstanding this accidental Inconveniency that may accrue from it, it must be an Over-stretch of Charity to wave insisting upon the Rights and Privileges of our Church; because this may prove to the disparagement of other Churches, whose unhappy Circumstances we commiserate, and are willing to make all reasonable Allowances for those Difficulties and Prejudices they may labour under: but can't betray our excellent Constitution, to shew our Charity and Moderation to any of 'em. Upon this Head one other Mistake (tho' not a very material one) which you are chargeable with, is to assert, That Ordination by Presbyters is practis'd in the greater Part of the Reformed Churches; for it is notorious, that the *Lutherans* (who have Bishops, and those in the Communion of the Church of *England*) are much more numerous than the *Calvinists*.

3dly, As to what you offer in relation to the Charge of *Schism*, it is equally groundless and precarious. For what a wretched Consequence must it be to infer from the Protestants in *France* being no Schismatics, that you are not so; when it is owned on all hands, that sinful Terms of Communion are enjoin'd in that Church? or how does it follow, that if you are Schismatics, the Episcopal Party in *Scotland* must be liable to the same Charge, who are a true and regularly constituted Church, tho' oppress'd by the Kirk, and depriv'd of their Civil Rights and Revenues? And what a frivolous Cavil is it, to insinuate that I lay the Stress of my Arguments in Proof of it upon the Laws that have been enacted in favour of our Church by the Civil Power? when it is as clear as the Light, that my Proofs in support of this Charge are founded upon a quite different Bottom, viz. that of Scripture and Antiquity: which till you are able to confute, you can't justify your Separation by any

any other Plea than the Act of Toleration, how much soever you seem to disclaim it. Thus having consider'd your notorious Misconstructions, and ill-grounded Conclusions, which discover some Errors in your Logick: I proceed to examine your Scripture-Proofs for your pretended Mission; which, I make no doubt of it, will equally discover your Mistakes in the Scriptures, as much as you value yourself and despise others on that Head. For tho' it must be allow'd to be a very unfair Treatment to put me upon answering your Objections, when it was your Province to answer the Arguments urged in my Paper; especially when I had already done it in a Letter written upon this Subject, which you are pleas'd to take no notice of, tho' refer'd to in this very Tract: yet, however, to give you all the Satisfaction within my power, I shall not decline that Task.

And here I beseech you to observe, That the promiscuous Use of the Word *Presbyter* and *Bishop* in Scripture is no argument that they are of one and the same Office; otherwise an Emperor and his General, an Apostle and a Presbyter are the same, as I have observ'd in that Letter: nor can you infer that they are of one and the same Order, because the same Qualifications are requir'd in both, since * Deacons are requir'd to have the same Qualifications with Bishops; yet nobody will affirm that they are of the same Order, as has been likewise made appear in the same Letter. However, tho' we shou'd allow you all you contend for, viz. that those call'd Bishops in † Scripture were no more than meer Presbyters; yet it doth by no means follow that these Scripture-Presbyters had the Power of Ordination vested in 'em; unless you can prove withal, that whoever were called in Scripture by the name of *Presbyters* or *Bishops*, were invested with this Power; which I dare positively affirm you can never do. For besides Deacons and Presbyters, which are commonly in Scripture called *Bishops*, there was a superior Order, that had Authority over both these; for such

* 1 Tim. iii. 2, 12.

† Philipp. i. 1, &c.

were the Twelve Apostles, *St. Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Timothy* and *Titus*, &c. For it appears from the Epistles which *St. Paul* writ to the two last of 'em, that they were invested with a Power of ordaining and governing Presbyters: for we find express Directions given 'em, about * ordaining Presbyters and Deacons; receiving Accusation against Presbyters and others, and exercising Ecclesiastical Censures upon Offenders. We likewise read †, that *St. Paul* and *Barnabas* ordain'd Elders in every Church at *Iconium*, *Antioch*, and *Lystra*; but it no where appears, that meer Presbyters could do it: For if they had this Power, what Reasons could be assign'd that *St. Paul* should leave *Titus* in *Crete* for that Purpose, when we know that that Island had been converted to Christianity long before *Titus* came thither; and therefore doubtless, they had then many Presbyters settled among 'em. And it is no more to be question'd, but there were several Presbyters settled at *Ephesus*, when *Timothy* was sent thither; and yet we find no Authority of this kind committed, and no Directions given about the Management of it, but to *Timothy* only: which seems to be a convincing Argument, that Presbyters were not then possess'd of it; especially when it does not appear ‡ from that ambiguous Passage touching *Timothy's* Ordination by the Hands of the Presbytery, which *St. Paul* mentions as perform'd by the laying on of his own Hands: And even *Calvin* himself can find nothing in it in your favour. Besides that the Presbyters here mention'd may very probably be some of the Apostles, for they are often named *Presbyters* in Scripture; however, the utmost that can be infer'd from it, is the Concurrence of Presbyters to shew their Consent and Approbation. And, indeed, it had been perfectly needless to have sent *Timothy* to *Ephesus*, for the Discharge of this Office, if the Presbyters there resident might have done it as well as himself: What slender Grounds then have you, to found the ordaining Power

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of Bishops

* 1 Tim. 5. 1. Titus i. 5. ii. 15.

† Acts xiv. 23.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

Of Presbyters upon this doubtful Passage; which learned Men, both antient and modern, are so much divided upon, that we have no less than Three different Opinions about the Sense of it: As for St. Paul's Charge to the Presbyters at *Miletus**, it can denote no more than their Over-sight over the Laity, as is evident from the very Words of the Text; and the same may be said of that of St. Peter. Nor is there any other Passage in Holy-Writ that intimates that meer Presbyters did ever exercise these Powers, as has been clearly demonstrated by several learned Men †. For an Answer to some Objections against these Persons, who were since distinguish'd by the name of *Bishops*, as being Evangelists or extraordinary Officers, or no more than Ministers of single Congregations, or a distinct Species from our *prelatical Bishops*, (as you are pleas'd to term 'em) I refer you to my Letter.

And as the ordaining Power of Presbyters has no Foundation in Scripture: so neither is there any Evidence for it in Antiquity, but just the Reverse of it ‡; as appears from Ecclesiastical History, and the Accounts we have therein of all the Councils and Canons for about 1500 Years.

Upon the Whole, if I have advanced nothing new in this small Tract, and if it is so miserably blended with Falsities and Mistakes as you represent it; then the more inexcusable you, that you have not returned a better Reply to it: For, upon this Supposition, it had been feasible and easy for you to have furnish'd yourself with Materials from Mr. J. O. (to whom you are indebted for your Scripture-Proofs, &c.) or some other Friend, in order to form that unanswerable Answer which you give out has been so often given to all that is material in it. And yet how much yours falls short of deserving this Character, he must be miserably blinded

* Acts xx. 17, 28. 1 Peter 5. 1, 2. † See your Scripture-Proofs more particularly and completely answer'd by Mr. Thomas, in his excellent Reply to Mr. J. O's Plea.

‡ See the first of the most ancient Canons call'd Apostolical, which make up part of the Code of the universal Church, and Bishop Billson's perpetual Government.

with Prejudice that can't discern. As for the Testimonies of modern Authors, which have been collected to your hands by Mr. J. Owen, and others; and these of several Sects and Denominations, as *Papists, Presbyterians,* and reputed *Church of England Men*; since our Debate is about a Matter of Fact, it can't be decided by their Authority, but by the Practice of the Church: And therefore the Opinions and Suffrages of Divines, can be of no weight in the present Case; but Recourse must be had to the Monuments of the Church in all Ages, as the surest Method to determine it in conjunction with the Holy Scriptures: which I presume you are not so great a Stranger to, as not to know how much they make against you in reference to the Matter in dispute. Otherwise, how easy a Task would it be to muster up a vastly greater Number of Authors to oppose yours, even tho' all your Quotations were pertinent; as I am persuaded some of them, nay a great many are not: And herein you may receive Satisfaction, if you consult Mr. Thomas's Answer to Mr. James Owen's Plea; where you'll find most of them answer'd, with some others not cited by you: which supercedes my making any further Remarks upon 'em, especially when they bear so small a relation to the Merit of the Cause; nor is it practicable in my Case, as having no Opportunities here in the Country of examining the Passages cited by you, for want of the Books referred to.

I am now come to the last Head I propos'd to myself to make the Subject of my Remarks, and that is your notorious Calumnies and Invectives; wherein you charge me with writing Falshoods, being an Incendiary, or having some other unworthy Designs: and that notwithstanding my express and solemn Declarations to the contrary; which how consistent it is with your Professions of Respect and Friendship in other Parts of your Letter, I am utterly at a loss to account for: But, as these ill Treatments are always look'd upon as Signs of a desperate and baffled Cause, and very unworthy of Christian Scholars and Divines, who are particularly obliged

obliged to have a greater regard to Truth and Charity, than to their several Sentiments and Opinions, instead of making any Returns of this kind, I shall over-look 'em; and put an end to your Trouble with this only Request, That you would not take me for your Enemy, because I endeavour to tell you the Truth: but believe me to be, notwithstanding these immerited Affronts and Indignities,

S I R,

Your Affectionate Friend,

and Humble Servant,

GRIFF JONES.

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